

Issue #181, November 22–December 19
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

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Breezy Point, Queens, three days after a fire destroyed 100 houses on Oct. 30.

Tom Angotti, Sarah Jaffe, Anooj Kansara, Nicholas Powers, John Tarleton & Chris Williams

DAVE SANDERS



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The Indypendent is a New York-based free newspaper published 13 times a year on Mondays for our print and online readership of more than 100,000. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 700 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Indypendent is affiliated with the New York City Independent Media Center, which is part of the global Indymedia movement, an international network dedicated to fostering grassroots media production, and with *IndyKids*, a children's newspaper. NYC IMC is an open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org).

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community calendar

SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS AT INDYEVENTS@GMAIL.COM.

MON NOV 19—FRI DEC 7

Anytime • Free

EVENT: HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE. Each night, 20,000 children sleep in emergency shelters. This holiday season, make a homeless child's life a little brighter by participating in this year's toy drive. Make a monetary donation online, or send new, unwrapped toys to the address below, labeled "Attention: Toy Drive."

Coalition for the Homeless

129 Fulton St

212-776-2000 • coalitionforthehomeless.org

FRI NOV 23

1pm • Free

ACTION: FUR-FREE FRIDAY. On the cusp of the annual holiday shopping frenzy, join Friends of Animals United and speak out against fur coats and other animal-based products. Macy's Department Store, 151 W 34th St

732-693-9044 • faunnj.org

SUN NOV 25

6pm • Donations encouraged

WORKSHOP: FIX YOUR BIKE. Make repairs to your bike while using tools and stands provided by Time's Up! Experienced mechanics will be present to answer questions.

99 S 6th St, Bklyn

212-802-8222 • times-up.org

TUE NOV 27

6pm • Free

OPENING: ART & AIDS: IT'S NOT OVER.

Join the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) for the opening reception of this exhibition, which features the work of dozens of artists. Exhibition runs through Dec. 2. Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art

26 Wooster St

212-431-2609 • leslielohman.org

FRI NOV 30

9pm • \$10 suggested

BENEFIT: PUNK ROCK KARAOKE. Come out and help raise money for three of the New York National Lawyers Guild's committees: the Muslim Defense Project, the Street Law Team and The United People of Color Caucus-New York (TUPOCC-NY). Hosted by Punk Rock Karaoke Northeast.

Pine Box Rock Shop

12 Grattan St, Bklyn

facebook.com/PunkRockKaraokeNortheast

FRI NOV 30—SAT DEC 1

9am • Free

9:30am • Sliding scale

CONFERENCE: URBAN UPRISING & RE-IMAGINING THE CITY. This two-day conference will discuss efforts in cities throughout the world to demand a more just and democratic society and how people can create cities that allow these demands to become reality. Speakers include David Harvey, Frances Fox Piven, Peter Marcuse and Nancy Romer. Admission to Friday's events, located at CUNY, is free; Saturday admission is sliding scale and panels are located at The New School. Sponsored by Right to the City, Brecht Forum, the Center for Place, Culture and Politics and The New School Urban Ecologies Program.

CUNY Graduate Center

Proshansky Auditorium

365 Fifth Ave

The New School, Tishman Auditorium

66 W 12th St

urban-uprising.org

SAT DEC 1

1-5pm • \$20

CLASS: INDYPENDENTREPORTING WORKSHOP. Learn how to report and write articles for *The Indypendent* and other radical media outlets. Email ehenderson@indypendent.org for an application. Deadline is Nov. 28. Space is limited.

The Indypendent

666 Broadway, Suite 510

212-904-1282 • indypendent.org

SUN DEC 2

4pm • Sliding scale

EVENT: GRUB COMMUNITY DINNER. Join In Our Hearts for a free and open community dinner. Almost all of the food served will be freegan, which means it is excess, ripe, nearly ripe or slightly damaged food that has been recovered from the waste of grocery stores. Dinners are held on the first and third Sundays of every month. First-come, first-served.

136 Lawrence St, 2nd Fl, Bklyn

inourheartsnyc.org

WED DEC 5

7pm • Free

OPENING: MULTIPLES — RADICAL PRINT-MAKING SHOW.

A night of art, music, and performance celebrating the opening of "Multiples," a group show of radical printmaking organized by Janelle Kilmer and Lucy Valkury. Prints available for purchase. Runs through Jan. 7. Bluestockings

UPCOMING EVENTS

THU, NOV 29 • 6pm

FILM SCREENING: GROUNDINGS: WALTER RODNEY ON FILM —

TERROR AND THE TIME.

This film grapples with the repression of the government of Guyana, their control on the media, and the use of unemployment as a control on political activists. Co-sponsored by the Africana Studies Group.

This event will take place at the CUNY Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Ave., Rm 540.

Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

WED DEC 5 • 7:30pm

PANEL: LEFT-WING NOIR — WITH TOM ADCOCK, S.J. ROZAN & STEVEN WISHNIA, MODERATED BY KENNETH WISHNIA.

A group of progressive crime writers discuss the ups and downs of working in a popular genre with a long history of social commentary and the challenges of being a creative artist in a profit-driven commercial medium.

Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

TUE DEC 11 • 6pm

BENEFIT: THE NEXT GENERATION — A RETIREMENT PARTY FOR LIZ MESTRES & CELEBRATING THE FOUNDERS OF THE BRECHT FORUM.

As we look to the next generation, this will be a chance for all of us to get together with old (and new) friends to celebrate Liz's work and that of the founders of this amazing educational/cultural project.

This event will take place at SEIU 32-BJ Auditorium, 25 W 18th St.

Sliding scale: \$25/\$50/\$100

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brechtforum.org
212-242-4201

172 Allen St

212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

THU DEC 6

6pm • Free

PANEL: SONIA PIERRE & THE STRUGGLE FOR CITIZENSHIP IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. Pierre (1963-2011) mobilized communities in the Dominican Republic to advocate citizenship and human rights for Dominicans of Haitian descent. This panel highlights the activism of young women who are moving forward with Pierre's work. Co-sponsored by Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees and The Barnard Center for Research on Women.

Barnard College, 3009 Broadway, 4th Fl,

James Rm

212-854-5262 • barnard.edu

SAT DEC 8

8pm • \$18 (sliding scale)

PERFORMANCE: HANUKAH CELEBRATION WITH ROBIN GREENSTEIN & CECILIA KIRTLAND. Greenstein and Kirtland will lead

audience members in a holiday sing-a-long, including a few celebrating Christmas, Kwanzaa, and the Wintertide, as well as Hanukkah. There will also be a menorah lighting, dreidel spinning and even latkes. No one turned away for lack of funds. Peoples' Voice Cafe at The Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist

40 E 35th St

212-787-3903 • peoplesvoicecafe.org

SAT DEC 15

10am • Free

ACTION: NOISE-A-THON 2012. Join Occupy Goldman Sachs in a 12-hour marathon of ruckus at CEO Lloyd Blankfein's front door. Bring pots, pans, drums and noisemakers of all kinds.

15 Central Park W

347-623-0535

buffaloprofessional@gmail.com

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WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT ?

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WBAI - 99.5 FM
120 Wall St., 10th fl.

Seward Park Library
192 E. Broadway
at Jefferson St.

Bluestockings
172 Allen St.

LES People's Federal Credit Union
39 Avenue B

Whole Earth Bakery
130 St. Mark's Pl.

Theater for the New City
155 First Ave.

St. Mark's Books
31 Third Ave.

Mamoun's Falafel Restaurant
22 St. Mark's Pl.

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

Shakespeare & Co.
716 Broadway

Hudson Park Library
66 Leroy St.

Brecht Forum
451 West St.

14TH TO 96TH ST.

Epiphany Library
228 E. 23rd St.

Muhlenberg Library
209 W. 23rd St.

Chelsea Square Restaurant
W. 23rd St. & Ninth Ave.

Columbus Library
942 Tenth Ave.

Manhattan Neighborhood Network
537 W. 59th St.

ABOVE 96TH ST.

Bloomingdale Library
150 W. 100th St.

Book Culture
526 W. 112th St.

Harlem Library
9 W. 124th St.

George Bruce Library
518 W. 125th St.

Hamilton Grange Library
503 W. 145th St.

Uptown Sister's Books
W. 156th St. & Amsterdam

BROOKLYN

Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Pkwy.

Brooklyn Library
1044 Eastern Pkwy.

Long Island University
1 University Plaza

Tea Lounge
Union St. & Seventh Ave.

Verb Café
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.

Pacific Street Library
25 Fourth Ave.

Outpost Café
1014 Fulton St.

Kaisa's Café
146 Bedford Ave.

Bedford Library
496 Franklin Ave.

Parkside Deli
203 Parkside Ave.

QUEENS

Court Square Diner
45-30 23rd St.

Diversity Center
77-11 37th St.

CUNY Law School
2 Court Sq.

Brandworkers
45-02 23rd St., 2nd Fl.

Aubergine Cafe
49-12 Skillman Ave.

Philippine Forum
40-21 96th St.

BRONX

Brook Park
141st St. & Brook Ave.

Mott Haven Library
321 E. 140th St.

Mi Casa Bakery
18 E. Bedford Park Blvd.

STATEN ISLAND

St. George Library Center
5 Central Ave.

Port Richmond Library
75 Bennett St.

Everything Goes Book Café
208 Bay St.

A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

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Changing the Political Climate

BY JOHN TARLETON

The Consolidated Edison substation that lit up the Manhattan sky so spectacularly on the night Hurricane Sandy arrived is a part of a massive, hulking power plant complex that has been sealed to all car and foot traffic since the 9/11 attacks.

In 2001 the nearby exit from FDR Drive was closed, and the east end of 14th Street was abruptly terminated with a chain-link fence at Avenue C, roughly a quarter-mile from the freeway.

When I lived in the East Village, I rode by the power plant many times on my bike, often stopping to stare up at the four giant smokestacks that loom high over the surrounding neighborhood. Under the prevailing norms of post-9/11 life, such precautions to thwart a possible terrorist attack seemed sensible.

Now, of course, we know that it was the ocean, supercharged by global warming, that was coming for Con Edison's power plant — not Al Qaeda.

The same goes for our wounded subway system, which saw many miles of track submerged by the storm and will likely require many months and billions of dollars to fully repair.

Protecting the subways from terrorists has been central to counterterrorism efforts in New York City, amid fears stoked in part by the 2004 arrest of the “Herald Square bomber.” The suspect, Shahawar Matin Siraj, was goaded and guided at every step by a New York Police Department informant until the government was ready to scoop him up. He was sent to prison for 30 years.

World Trade Center 1 (the “Freedom Tower”) has been rebuilt with special blast-proof materials and will be the most heavily guarded building in the country when it finally opens. None of this spared the World Trade Center reconstruction site itself from the surging seas that poured down West Street and filled the lower level of the site with millions of gallons of salt water. Port Authority officials are still assessing the situation. According to *Crain's New York Business*, the flooding “could potentially

cause costly damage to equipment and electrical systems at the multibillion-dollar construction project.”

What happens when more powerful storms occur in the future?

For the past 11 years, we've been told that no effort or expense should be spared in the War on Terror lest “they” strike the “homeland” again. Combined spending on the military and domestic security agencies now approaches a trillion dollars per year.

Climate scientists first informed politicians in the late 1980s about the threats posed by growing levels of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere. Levels of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, have continued to climb each year. Scientists warn that, as temperatures rise, we are approaching a tipping point after which runaway global warming will destabilize life as we know it.

According to Munich Re, one of the world's leading reinsurance firms, the number of “weather-related loss events” in North America has increased by 500 percent over the past three decades.

In the past year, we have seen the hottest annual temperature in U.S. history, record melting of the Arctic ice cap, a summer drought that affected 80 percent of farmland in the Midwest and the Great Plains and now Sandy. This follows 332 consecutive months, dating back to March 1985, in which average global monthly temperatures have been higher than the overall 20th-century average.

Yet nothing changes, as the oil and gas industries go on reaping many billions of dollars in profits.

Faced with projections of more climate chaos in the decades ahead, both major-party presidential candidates ignored climate change throughout the campaign. In-

tion on small bands of scary Islamic extremists on the other side of the world. But the real danger lies much closer to home.

In one sense, the threat is in the changing physics and chemistry of the planet — warmer ocean waters, higher levels of moisture in the atmosphere, melting ice-caps — but those are merely symptoms. The real threat lies in the fossil fuel industries that will, if unfettered, lock us permanently into a dirty-energy future that will fry the planet — and a capitalist system that rewards the short-term profiteering of the few at the expense of the many as well as of the natural world.

If “green capitalism” is possible, let's see it soon. However, to have a viable future, it increasingly looks like we will have to make a more dramatic shift to an environmentally centered democratic socialism — yes, the S-word — that places key sectors of the economy under public control, enacts a green deal, places a new emphasis on local and regional economies, gives people dignified jobs, promotes participatory democracy and makes a decisive break with the capitalist ideology of economic growth at all costs. Otherwise, we can expect planetary ecosystems to unravel further as we descend into a world in which desperate battles are fought over dwindling resources amid widespread social disintegration.

System change or climate change? That will be our fundamental choice in the decades

ahead. Conventional political wisdom says the former is impossible. But the rapidly changing environment we live in suggests it's essential — and that we fail to make it happen at our peril.

It has been convenient for politicians and the corporate media to fix the public's atten-



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Solidarity Not Charity

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY BABITA PATEL

Within a couple of days of Hurricane Sandy, a massive grassroots relief effort was underway as activists with ties to Occupy Wall Street teamed up with existing community organizations to meet the needs of New Yorkers. More than three dozen community hubs have been set up across the city to dispense water, food and aid, and form

work groups to help storm victims with clean-up. One of the main distribution centers is located at St. Jacobi Church in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, where volunteers help with everything from sorting through donations to transporting supplies to neighborhoods in need. Thousands of people have participated as volunteers with Occupy Sandy. Organizers say they expect to be active for many months to come.



Canned goods, bottled water and other provisions are available for anyone in need of supplies.



Heather stands with fellow volunteers as she takes a break from helping out as dispatch coordinator for vehicles and supplies.



Signs posted outside of St. Jacobi Church list the addresses of nearby recovery sites.



Fabio Toscano hands out cleaning supplies to residents in Staten Island.



A volunteer communications team works together to find out what people need and organize the distribution of supplies.



Cameran Hew helps move boxes of donated clothing. Occupy Sandy received so many items of clothing that they are now routing all future textile donations to the Salvation Army.

HELP NOW!
Volunteer to help with Occupy Sandy Recovery
by visiting:
interoccupy.net/occupysandy

Occupy Springs Into Action

BY SARAH JAFFE

For those of us who've spent the last few years covering the struggles of everyday people against the financial and corporate giants who've consolidated wealth to unheard-of levels, the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy has been an exercise in "Where the hell have you been?"

The comparisons to Katrina have been everywhere, of course, but for me they hit home when, safe and warm in my Crown Heights apartment, I saw friends and acquaintances who'd been involved with Occupy Wall Street tweeting their relief activities under the hashtag #OccupySandy. As they set up their hub in Red Hook I couldn't help but think of New Orleans' mutual aid after the storm, and how leftists and radicals (such as Malik Rahim, who learned about community care from the Black Panthers' free food and tutoring programs) step quietly into the spaces left vacant by cuts to social programs and city budgets.

Julietta Salgado, a Brooklyn College student and organizer, told me that it started with a text message from a handful of folks working with the Free University. That group wound up at the Red Hook Initiative and from there fanned out into the streets of wealthy, dry Carroll Gardens to seek donations.

"We just walked from door to door and every single person responded, no one turned us down," Salgado said. "People were thanking us for coming. I think we gave an entryway to some folks who didn't know how to help."

The aftermath of disaster, particularly in a neoliberal state whose safety net has been shredded, is a void waiting to be filled by mutual aid. When the state simply isn't there, people step up to take care of each other — not just looking out for themselves as our libertarian friends would have it, but working together as communities in solidarity.

The idea of mutual aid was as much at the foundation of the Occupy movement as its hotly debated horizontalism and opposition to the banks.

The Friday after Sandy, not long after cultural historian Thomas Frank declared Occupy dead, I walked into St. Jacobi Church in Sunset Park and saw familiar faces from Zuccotti Park. They weren't sitting around debating how to talk about the revolution, as Frank would have it; they were doing hard, necessary, practical work to feed, clothe and support swathes of the city reeling from the superstorm. The obituaries of Occupy had never seemed so wrong.

The church basement was filled with vol-

unteers standing around tables, some preparing food, some sorting donations and putting together boxes, like the Kitchen and Comfort stations many of us remember from Occupy Wall Street. All would be fed. All would be clothed. Instead of waiting for those in need to arrive, as they had at Zuccotti, volunteers were now loading cars filled with precious gasoline to drive to Coney Island, to the Rockaways, to anywhere people weren't being cared for.

"It's amazing how organized we are. It's amazing how much so many people involved with the social movement have learned about themselves, about each other, about how to put these values into practice," said

for Sandy — organizers who make their (meager) livings providing services to people facing foreclosure, to immigrant workers fighting wage theft, to neighborhoods trying to keep out the corporate-backed charter schools — have played a vital role in the relief effort. Political organizing and mutual aid go hand in hand, or they should. The early labor movement wasn't just about organizing on the job, but organizing in neighborhoods. The folks still trying to build an anticapitalist movement in this country know that shell-shocked people can't organize until their basic needs have been met.

Rebecca Solnit has written eloquently of the communities that arise in disaster. Occupy Wall Street was a response to a disaster, too: the slow-moving financial hurricane that destroyed homes as surely as the storm. So it shouldn't be surprising that after Sandy moved through, the first people to jump into action were the same ones who made things run in the park. Observers all agree that the movement suffered from a lack of focus after the encampments were cleared out, but Sandy provided an immediate and critical focus. Within hours, Occupy was already using pre-existing social networks to kick off the relief effort.

"We scaled up in 24 hours. It's really a testament to how this specific set of values was able to really get us organized with one clear, focused vision," Premo said.

SENSE OF URGENCY

As I finished up a 10-hour day volunteering in Sunset Park, cars were departing, volunteers were leaving and more coming to replace them, familiar faces running in with news of possible staging locations in other parts of the city. The rhythm was different than Zuccotti Park, the sense of urgency more acute, with reports pouring in of neighborhoods desperately in need of support. But the work was the same, even if the motivation was different. Meet people's needs, help them solve their problems.

Blackouts provided just a temporary respite from the daily hustle of late-capitalist New York City, but in that space there was room for something else.

As Salgado put it: "The cops are still doing what we expected them to do, Bloomberg is still doing what we expected him to do, and we're still doing what we expected us to do — but no one else did."

An earlier version of this article appeared on jacobinmag.com.



Michael Premo, one of the Occupy organizers in Sunset Park.

I'd seen lines around the block for food, diapers, blankets, flashlights and water, as the Red Hook Initiative/Occupy Sandy effort expanded to more buildings. The public housing all around us was still cold and without power, but there were so many volunteers that they didn't know what to do with us all. Salgado showed up again the next day and saw two people whose doors she'd knocked on the night before. They were there to help.

POLITICAL ORGANIZING

Community groups that jumped into action

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For Sandy's Responders, Saying Thanks Isn't Enough

BY ARI PAUL

On the night Hurricane Sandy made devastating landfall, I huddled in my north Brooklyn apartment with a police scanner tuned to the Fire Department's dispatch channel, which broadcast harrowing tales from around the five boroughs: live electrical wires whipping around in the wind, backup power failing at hospitals and flooding in basements and subway tunnels.

I was safe at home, but workers of all stripes risked their lives that night to mitigate the disaster — and the night of the storm was only the beginning.

In the weeks since Sandy, we've heard plenty of paeans to the first responders in the media, from politicians and individuals — all of which are well deserved.

But it really isn't enough to praise the bravery of the firefighters, sanitation workers, utility workers, transit workers and others who braved the elements to save lives and are still struggling to make the city normal again. And it isn't enough to recognize that grocery stores remained stocked and restaurants remained open because of workers (many of them immigrants, many undocumented) who made their deliveries in dangerous conditions.

We have to give these acts of bravery actual, material value.

This summer, Consolidated Edison, which made \$1 billion in profits last year, locked its unionized workers out — the same workers who scrambled to bring electricity back to thousands of shivering residents. Verizon workers, who struck last year for fair wages and benefits against the telecom giant, which made \$2.4 billion in profits, worked long and dangerous shifts to restore the phones and internet so that storm survivors could connect with the outside world.

More than 30,000 New York subway and bus workers are now working without a contract because of stalled talks with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The tabloids have complained that they are overcompensated, and management uses their legitimate demands as an excuse to raise fares and cut service. I wonder if the millions of people stranded without subway access would think these workers are overcompensated if they spent even one hour in the tunnels, cleaning up debris in toxic, often dangerously electrified water.

As for Mayor Bloomberg, he insisted on docking city workers' pay when they did not show up for work, even as trains were shut down and he admonished New Yorkers to stay off the streets — effectively forcing workers to pay for the crisis. Many hourly workers struggled to make sure that residents had access to food and supplies not simply out of the kindness of their hearts but because even missing one shift would mean a severe loss of income. Yet our government, led by self-professed progressives, strikes back at them when they reach for dignity and safety in the workplace, despite what they do for us.

Even firefighters, whose service has been praised to the skies ever since 9/11, constantly battle proposed firehouse closings due to budget cuts. As Capt. Al Hagan of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association said during a round of budget cuts several years ago, such cuts are always felt most acutely by low-income communities of color. New Yorkers watched FDNY Emergency Medical Service trucks provide critical care during and af-

tings, unlike, say, bankers and industrialists. Hurricane Sandy should be society's wake-up call.

Obviously, all of these workers couldn't get the job done alone. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, community groups such as CAAAV, Good Old Lower East Side and Occupy Sandy (a relief group formed by supporters of Occupy Wall Street) began providing direct assistance, using relief as a

claim that in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy this kind of grassroots, mutual aid was flexing its muscle and demonstrating its superiority to state assistance.

Mutual aid is a nice idea, but one that can only go so far. Yes, community groups can and should organize outside the normal channels of the state to provide assistance. But these groups just aren't big enough, skilled enough or monied enough to do the bigger jobs: fixing the third rail on the subway, repairing downed power lines or transporting hazardous materials. For our modern city to address disaster, human-made and otherwise, we need sustained and broad investment in public works. This means taking more money away from top earners and putting it into the systems that keep the city running and its workers working.

Call it socialism if you want. But when an EMT risks her life to save yours in a storm, maybe socialism won't seem so bad.

Transport Workers Union Local 100 President John Samuels, who represents most subway and bus workers, isn't optimistic about employers coming around to seeing their workers' value in the aftermath of the storm.

"We've risen to the occasion dozens of times over the last decade," he said by phone. "In the blizzard two years ago, transit workers dug the city out and put the economy back on track. Hurricane Irene, exact same thing. I don't think the MTA will turn around and say, 'You know what, the transit workers deserve a fair raise.'"

But he has faith in working New Yorkers who value what workers of all sectors did during the storm. "The working people absolutely appreciate what we do," Samuels said. "It has to do with the political calculations that we can balance the budget on the backs of workers and not the richest residents of New York State."

If there is any silver lining to this disaster — other than that it may spark, finally, a serious discussion among those in power about how to address global climate change — it should be that we, as a city, state and country, have to reassess what we think of as the state and the role of workers.

All of these workers, unionized and otherwise, should build on their collective role in the hurricane by uniting to push for real improvements like sick-day legislation for retail and food service workers or a fair contract for transit workers.

But they have to act fast, before the impact of this crisis fades from memory. Samuels, a resident of south Brooklyn, noted that the areas near the waterfront still look like a war zone. As he was surveying the area after the storm, a cop approached him, realizing that he was one of the city's labor leaders.

Samuels recalled what the cop said to him, referring to the bosses who praised their responders' job during the storm: "You see all these cops on the lookout for looting, all the firefighters responding in Breezy Point, and the transit workers? Three weeks from now they'll forget all about it and try to attack our pensions even more."



WORKING THE LINE: MTA employee Vladimir Portnoy pumps out the Dyckman Street subway stop in Manhattan's Inwood neighborhood after Hurricane Sandy.

ter the storm, but few know that emergency medical technicians earn less than \$46,000 even after five years on the job.

What all these workers have in common is that the dominant "me-first" rhetoric of fiscal conservatism says that they are somehow making too much — and their contributions to society don't compensate for their earn-

form of social-justice organizing when the state apparatus was unable — or unwilling — to help residents. This "solidarity, not charity" approach uses a non-state, nonhierarchical relief model designed by groups such as the New Orleans-based Common Ground Relief. One of that group's leaders, Scott Crow, took to social media to pro-

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On the Waterfront

MAKE THE RICH PAY FOR FORTIFYING THEIR LUXURY ENCLAVES

By TOM ANGOTTI

Sandy has triggered a public debate about how to protect the city in the future given the growing consensus that powerful storms and sea level rise are inevitable. But who will be protected? And who will pay?

Gov. Andrew Cuomo thinks New York City needs floodgates. Mayor Michael Bloomberg thinks other drastic measures have to be taken. Both of them have joined the chorus linking Sandy's devastation with global climate change. But neither of them has suggested he would stray from government's long tradition of protecting big real estate interests and abandoning those living at the margins, such as the tenants in the public housing projects of the Rockaways, Coney Island and Red Hook.

There needs to be a more equitable strategy going forward that forces the powerful real estate giants in Manhattan to pay the steep price of fortifying their luxury enclaves and puts public funds into protecting the most vulnerable working people.

The Cuomo and Bloomberg proposals are examples of short-term thinking dressed up in green rhetoric. They fail to look deeply at the long-term sustainability of the city. They obscure the basic questions of who benefits and who pays. If the chief beneficiaries of expensive dikes and other greening measures are downtown and waterfront property owners, why shouldn't they foot their fair share of the bill? If the captains of the growth machine took the risk with their capital, why should government have to bail them out?

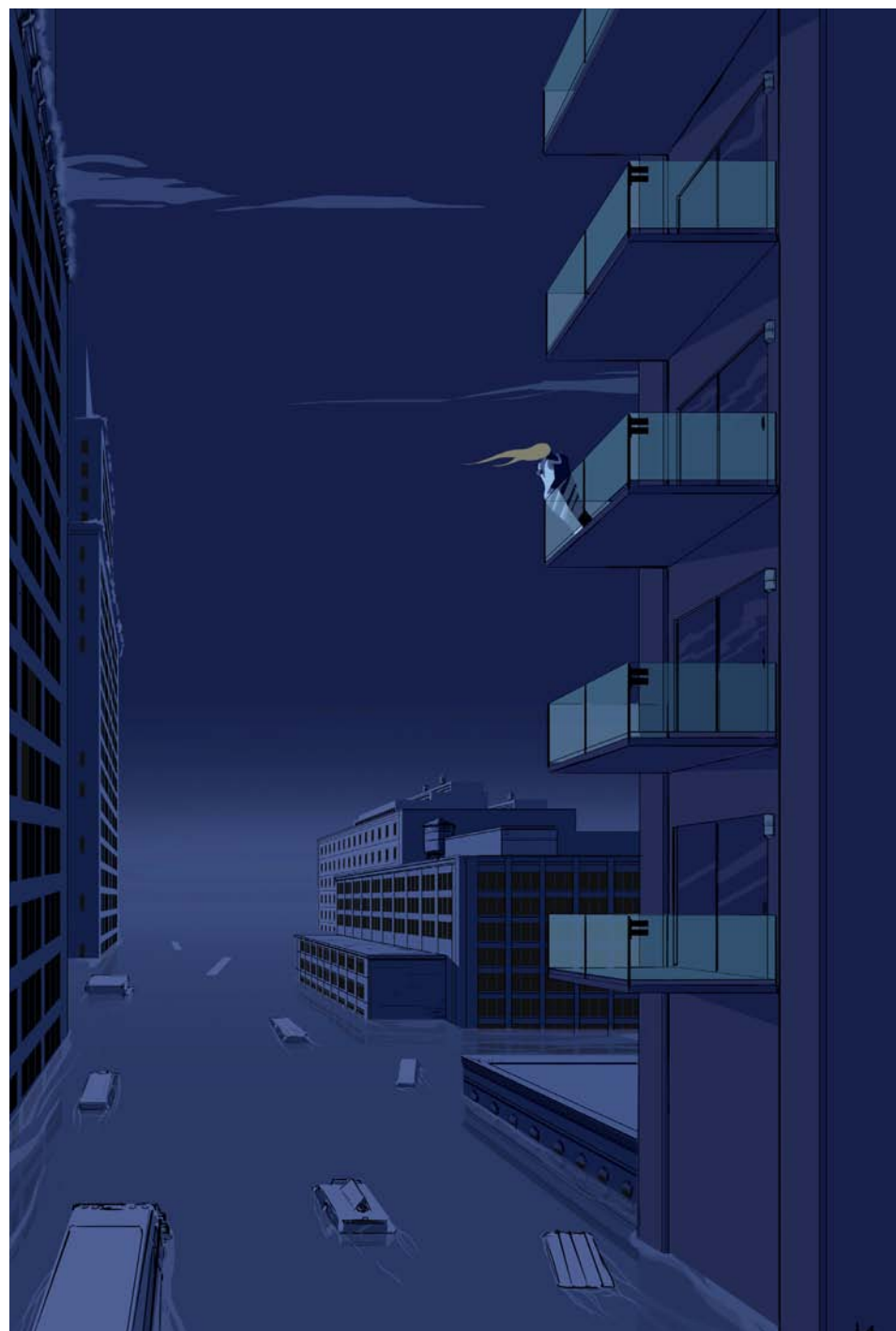
On the other hand, if the city and state administrations seriously want to address climate change, they might begin to limit development in flood-prone areas instead of promoting it. They could also put more money into preserving and retrofitting the city's housing stock, especially public housing and homes in vulnerable areas, instead of wasting money to protect lavish new developments.

PROTECTING INVESTORS

The corporate press has been quick to hail the declarations of the mayor and governor as evidence of necessary change in a world where climate change deniers, heavily funded by the fossil fuel lobby, have managed to prevent serious action. But on closer look, the Cuomo-Bloomberg discussion is mostly about protecting existing and future investments in New York City's most valuable real estate, including Mayor Bloomberg's signature development projects located along the most vulnerable upscale waterfronts. For them, the underlying issue isn't really climate change but how to get government to put up the massive expenditures needed to protect "the real estate capital of the world." By wrapping themselves in a green mantle of climate change adaptation, they can convince others that they're saving the world.

Up till now Bloomberg has been skeptical of proposals to build hugely expensive barriers in the harbor. Many high-end real estate interests, after all, are on high ground, and the newer projects are likely to be built to withstand the worst. Bloomberg has also been a forceful advocate for building more, not less, on the city's waterfront, leaving it to engineers and architects to deal with protections against storm surges. Ambitious

measures to protect the less fortunate living in low-lying Zone A, however, were never contemplated. City Hall's policy has been to make these areas more attractive for private developers on the assumption they will do the job themselves. Budget cuts in Washington are bleeding public housing to death all over the country, so the long-term trend is for the privatization or demolition of the giant public housing projects in these areas. (an attempt was already made in the Rockaways under the federal government's HOPE VI program but failed in part due to tenant resistance.)



As an alternative to building barriers, the city administration has favored more modest long-term measures such as rebuilding wetlands or creating new ones, and improving the ability to divert and absorb storm water overflows. After Sandy, however, this option appears to be quite limited.

LEGACY PROJECTS

Bloomberg's "legacy" development projects are mostly on the waterfront, and they have received millions of dollars in subsidies from the city's Economic Development Corporation. The mayor has publicly touted the

planned multi-billion-dollar Hudson Yards redevelopment on Manhattan's west side as his trophy project. He is using his last year in office to try to set in stone the more controversial developments, such as Willets Point and Hunters Point in Queens. Other projects, including cruise terminals in Manhattan and Brooklyn and commercial recreation areas such as Brooklyn Bridge Park, are in place or under development.

The Bloomberg strategy goes beyond direct city subsidies for waterfront projects. In the last decade the administration passed more than 110 rezoning proposals around

fund cleanup and refuses to question an ambitious new condo project in Gowanus. The mayor argues that the best hope for cleaning up the toxic land and water lies in private real estate development, which would improve each site as it develops. However, this would only shift the problem from one property to another and would still expose new residents and workers to toxic waste.

In perhaps the most dramatic rezoning, the city overcame substantial opposition by neighborhood groups and in 2005 rezoned the waterfront in Brooklyn's Williamsburg. This unleashed a frenzy of luxury condo development on the waterfront, resulted in the displacement of thousands of industrial jobs and virtually wiped out one of the last remaining city neighborhoods to combine industry and housing. A similar process evolved in Long Island City, Queens, over the last two decades. In the thrall of big real estate money and waterfront views, City Hall never questioned the wisdom of lining the waterfront with more towers.

GROWTH MACHINE

Let's not blame it all on Bloomberg. The frenzy to build in the flood zones began in earnest in the 1980s. The aging port facilities had closed and moved to New Jersey by the early 1970s but the city's fiscal crisis froze any efforts to redevelop the waterfront. By the 1980s the real estate market began to boom again. In 1993, the city completed a comprehensive waterfront plan and new waterfront zoning regulations. Now the big investment trusts, equity funds and banks that put up the money for the new waterfront properties in Brooklyn and Queens, along with towers in lower Manhattan that got submerged by Sandy, are facing threats to their lower floors and bottom lines. They will certainly not pay for the repairs to the city's streets, sewers and subway systems. But if the flooding continues they will have to pay to fix their buildings.

Could the selfish interests of the real estate growth machine actually benefit all the rest of us, following traditional trickle-down economics? After all, some argue, it was real estate interests that made possible construction of the nation's largest subway system, and even though it was an unintended consequence, the subway has drastically reduced the need for burning carbon. Perhaps so, but imagine if the subway had been a truly public transit system from the start, as it is in many other big cities of the world. Then there may not have been a need for a public buyout of the first two private companies in the 1930s after they were milked dry by their investors. Imagine if instead of having three separate systems that all converge in Manhattan's overblown real estate market, and several separate suburban rail systems, there had been a region-wide system that served the vast majority of the population in the tri-state area, which live, after all, in the suburbs and not in New York City.

It's this kind of holistic, long-term thinking that is urgently needed as New Yorkers look to a future of rising sea waters and more storms like Sandy.

Tom Angotti is Director of the Hunter College Center for Community Planning & Development and author of *New York for Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate* (MIT Press, 2008).

Oil's New Supply Boom Is a Bust for the Climate

BY STEVE KRETZMANN, LORNE STOCKMAN AND DAVID TURNBULL

What if you knew that smoking that one last packet of cigarettes was going to give you cancer? Imagine if our understanding of cancer was so precise as to allow doctors to predict with virtual certainty that smoking that particular pack, which you just picked up at the corner store, would definitely be the last straw and cause you to contract life-threatening cancer? Obviously, you would not smoke that pack.

In the world today, global warming is our collective cancer, and despite dire and clear warnings, the oil industry is still smoking away. The best climate science in the world tells us that in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we need to limit global warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius. But the amount of new oil production the industry is bringing on line over the next eight years is exponentially more than we can afford to burn and stay under 2 degrees Celsius. We simply cannot afford to burn all the oil that the industry is capable of producing over the next few years and in the long term.

It is worth noting that this is a new equation that reaches essentially the same conclusion as the Carbon Tracker/Bill McKibben Math, but by using the actual plans of the industry itself rather than estimates of fuels in the ground. Carbon Tracker measured the total amount of carbon in fossil fuels in existing reserves (2,795 gigatons) and found them to be five times more than can be safely burned (565 gigatons). That is terrifying, although this does not tell us along what timeline those reserves will be pulled out of the ground.

In this case, we are looking at what the oil industry is building or is expected to build in the next eight years (110.6 million barrels per day of oil production capacity), and comparing it to what experts agree that our oil usage needs to be in that same timeframe if we are to avoid climate disaster (88.1 million barrels per day). In short, what this new analysis tells us is that the oil industry is in fact developing more than enough oil over the next eight years to lock in climate chaos.

OIL'S NEW SUPPLY BOOM

In June 2012, a paper from the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs shook the energy policy world. The paper was entitled "Oil: The Next Revolution."

In the paper, Leonardi Maugeri, a former executive at Italian oil giant ENI and fellow of the Belfer Center's Geopolitics of Energy Project, detailed the astounding level of investment and activity going on in the global oil industry today.

Maugeri conducted a unique field-by-field analysis of the major oil projects proposed and under construction in most of the world's oil-producing zones. He concluded

the global oil boom. Canada's tar sands and the United States' light crude, obtained through hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and horizontal drilling, are the new heavyweights in North American oil production.

Maugeri's analysis has U.S. production growing by 3.5 million barrels per day by 2020 to 11.6 million barrels per day — this factors in infrastructural constraints on development and decline in existing fields. He forecasts Canadian oil production, led by tar sands production and tight oil, growing 2.2 million barrels per day to 5.5 million barrels per day. So the United States and Canada alone could be contributing 32 percent of the world's oil production growth

duces annual energy demand forecasts using several scenarios. One of these scenarios in charts where current policies take us and another maps where policies that would have a strong chance at constraining climate change to within 2 degrees Celsius would place energy demand.

If we use the 2011 IEA scenarios as a benchmark, the difference between the oil production capacity that the industry is currently planning for 2020 and where oil demand must be to constrain climate change is a staggering 22.5 million barrels per day.

Therefore, 79 percent of the oil production capacity being planned for 2020 is above the safe level of global oil demand in that year.

Perhaps even more disturbing is the fact that the IEA analysis of current policies predicts a rise in global temperatures of 6 degrees Celsius. Most climate scientists agree that this will make the planet unlivable. The industry's current objectives would exceed this level by 16 million barrels a day.

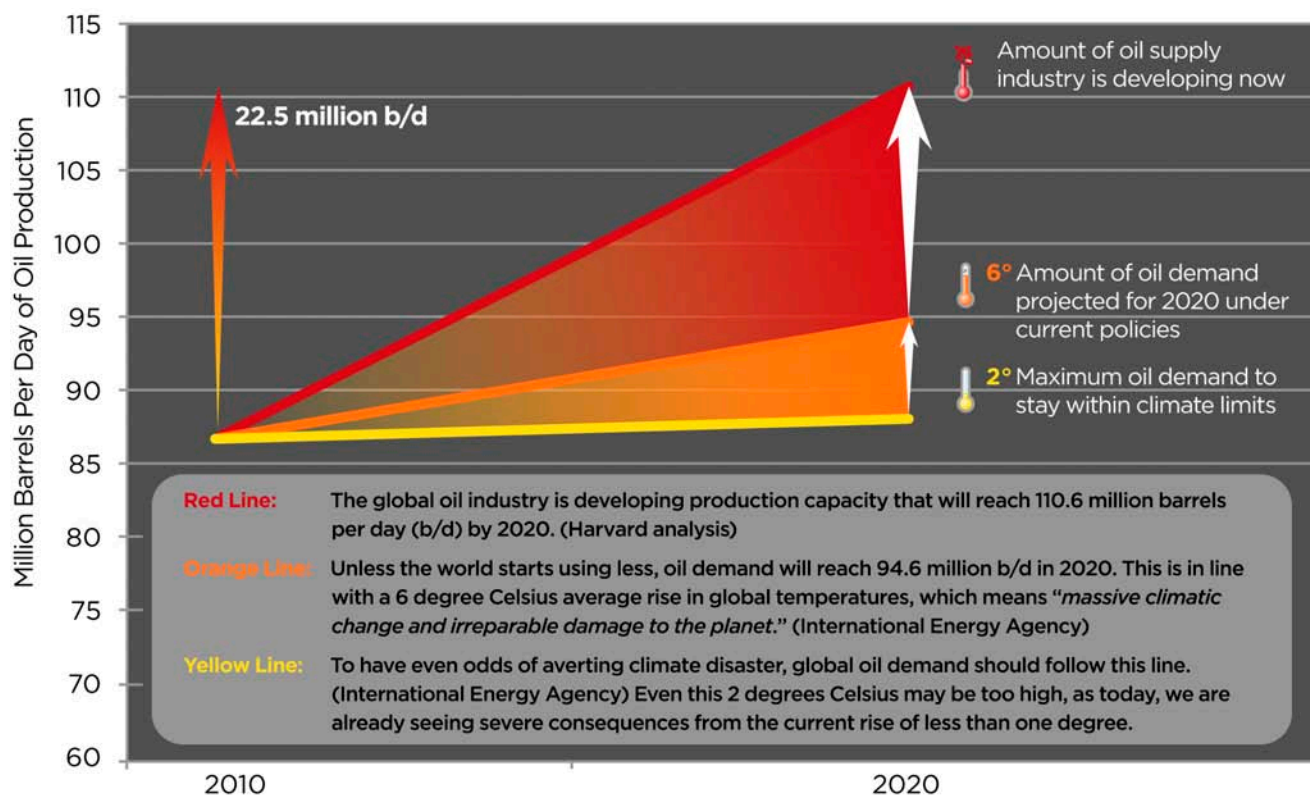
Spurred on by rising oil prices since 2003, the global oil industry, with the United States and Canada at the forefront, has invested billions of dollars in developing technology to access billions of barrels of previously inaccessible oil. This may have postponed the so-called "peak oil" crisis but it has precipitated a far worse crisis that will be irreversible.

The IEA 2 degrees Celsius scenario (also known as the 450 Scenario, which recent science suggests is conservative), states that

global oil demand should peak by 2018 and steadily decline thereafter. We are currently not on that trajectory, but investing in and developing capacity to surpass it by more than 25 percent can only guarantee that we will not make it. Instead, the world needs to aggressively invest in oil demand reduction rather than a continued unsustainable binge.

We need to constrain global oil production to within climate limits now, before the oil industry locks us into inevitable climate disaster.

This article was originally published on priceofoil.org.



The oil industry is developing 22.5 million barrels per day of production capacity above climate limits

that almost 50 million barrels per day of oil production capacity is potentially under development through 2020. He adjusted this down to 28.6 million barrels per day after factoring in risks that would prevent some of these projects from materializing.

After taking into account the decline in production from currently producing fields, he concluded that by 2020 global oil production capacity could reach 110.6 million barrels per day.

The United States and Canada are at the forefront of this oil boom. Triggered by high global oil prices, the development of technology to access unconventional oil resources in these countries is a significant factor in

over the next eight years.

Maugeri's analysis indicates that the global oil industry, with North America leading the charge, is currently investing in an energy production scenario that guarantees global climate chaos.

Finally, it should be noted that Maugeri's analysis of the industry's growth is by no means the most aggressive. Citigroup, for one, has a much more bullish scenario for the North American oil industry that has been widely cited, even by both U.S. presidential campaigns.

NARROW PATHWAY TO STABILITY

The International Energy Agency (IEA) pro-

NORTH AMERICA'S DIRTY ENERGY REVOLUTION

“North America is becoming the new Middle East. The only thing that can stop this is politics — environmentalists getting the upper hand over supply in the U.S., for instance; or First Nations impeding pipeline expansion in Canada...”
— Citigroup Global Perspectives & Solutions, March 2012

TEXT BY JOHN TARLETON
GRAPHIC BY MIKAEL TARKELA



SOURCES: NEW YORK TIMES, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, INSIDE CLIMATE NEWS, US NEWS, GULF TIMES, OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, VERMONT LAW, EARTHWORKS OIL & GAS ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT, COAL EXPORT ACTION, COALITION AGAINST THE ROCKAWAY PIPELINE, NYULOCAL.COM, EARTHJUSTICE.ORG.

Healing a Stricken City & Greening the Planet

By Chris Williams

The Maldives are a country in peril. The collection of 1200 islands and atolls, the highest point of which is a mere five feet above sea-level, were put on the map of world consciousness by the first democratically elected president, Mohamed Nasheed. Until overthrown in a military coup by a regime unwilling to countenance democracy, Nasheed became famous when he held a Cabinet meeting under water to highlight the plight of his country. He was the subject of the documentary for his efforts to raise awareness of climate change and the resulting sea-level rise that will likely make his nation the first to disappear beneath the waves.

The Maldives, better known for its exclusive resorts than the fact that 320,000 people currently call the islands home, is in danger of being overwhelmed by the Indian Ocean this century. But what if, instead of the remote island paradise, it's a major city that goes first?

Of course we could and should have been engaged with this question after Katrina flooded 80 percent of New Orleans in 2005. Two weeks after Frankenstorm Sandy, with dozens dead, many thousands of New Yorkers still struggling without power, running water or heat and 40,000 people made homeless, now is another good time to be looking for answers.

How should New York, brought to its knees by Sandy, rebuild to make it a beacon to other coastal cities around the world, the inhabitants of which are watching the suffering of our city with horror and, after a quick glance at climate change data for their region, a deepening sense of foreboding?

There has been much debate about the extent to which Hurricane Sandy may have been made larger and stronger and, in an unusual deviation for this time of year, pushed onto land to devastate the Northeast coast rather than moving back out to sea. As associate editor of *Scientific American* David Biello argued:

"Global warming didn't spawn Sandy but it certainly contributed to the impact, with a couple of features definitely worsening it. ... Higher sea surface temperatures have made the storm surge stronger. ... Normally hurricanes come up to the coast and turn right back into the ocean, but as a consequence of the major meltdown of Arctic sea ice this summer, there was a weather pattern preventing Sandy from taking that course, and [it] steered it back into land."

In August, the director of NASA Goddard

Institute for Space Studies, James Hansen, who testified to Congress in 1988 about the reality of human-induced climate change, wrote in the *Washington Post*:

"Our analysis shows that it is no longer enough to say that global warming will increase the likelihood of extreme weather and to repeat the caveat that no individual weather event can be directly linked to climate change. To the contrary, our analysis shows that, for the extreme hot weather of the recent past, there is virtually no explanation other than climate change."

Reviewing some of the extreme weather events around the world over the last few years, Hansen went on to say:

"These weather events are not simply an example of what climate change could bring. They are caused by climate change. The odds that natural variability created these extremes are minuscule, vanishingly small. To count on those odds would be like quitting your job and playing the lottery every morning to pay the bills."

Ultimately however, we are asking the wrong question. The issue of whether this or that extreme weather event, such as Sandy or the massive U.S. drought this year, was exacerbated by climate change is overshadowed by the knowledge that we only have a single planet.

We know for a fact that carbon dioxide, a compound linked through many scientific studies to global warming, is being pumped in vast quantities into the atmosphere. In confirmation of this, witness the tragic irony of people in the Northeast waiting for hours to fill up their gas tanks with the stuff that is largely responsible for increasing the concentrations of that compound and thereby altering the heat balance of the planet. It makes no sense to think that humans can extract and burn 80 million barrels of oil every day and it will have no impact on the composition of the air we breathe and that increasing the concentration of a climate-regulating gas such as carbon dioxide will

not have global implications for climate.

We also know for a fact that New York has seen a 12-inch increase in sea level over the last century, alongside an average temperature increase of 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit. We also know that a 600-mile stretch of the East Coast of the United States is a regional "hot spot" for sea-level rise, which is getting higher 3-4 times faster than the global

no Planet B, we need to systematically and rapidly move to reduce our dependence, not on foreign oil, but on all oil, gas, coal and uranium. Furthermore, instead of continuing on our current path toward greater oil consumption, which will cause global warming to spin out of control, we urgently need to investigate ways of living more in tune with our natural surroundings before we lose control of our destiny. On current projections, oil consumption is predicted to rise to 110 million barrels by 2020 while carbon dioxide emissions rose by 2.5 percent last year.

What would our city look like if it were built to withstand and accommodate the kind of monster storms that are becoming more prevalent due to climate change? What would our city look like if it were made for people, not cars?

There are two quite different sets of answers to those questions. On the one hand, like some mediaeval fortress, we could spend approximately \$10-17 billion building sea fortifications. On the other hand, rather than adopting a siege mentality, shielding ourselves from the blows raining down from an enraged Mother Nature by encasing New York in ring of iron and steel revetments, we could build a city that is a genuine testament to forward-thinking, long-term-planning worthy of the 21st century.

Building sea-walls and oceanic sea gates that would open and close as needed isn't unprecedented; several cities have built large and small versions, including Holland, which is a country that is largely below sea level to begin with. But there are some unique and complex challenges to building such gates on the scale required to protect a city of eight million located on a series of low-lying islands off the coast of the North Atlantic.

First, such a scheme, from planning to implementation, would take decades to be operational; clearly, New York City does not have decades. Second, if one is going



average. Thus, with two hurricanes in the Northeast in two years, what we are looking at is more of the same. No doubt this is why 95 percent of cities in Latin America are making contingency plans for climate change and its impact on their locations.

Therefore, just on the basis of the Precautionary Principle and knowing that there is

350.ORG TAKES AIM AT FOSSIL FUEL GIANTS

In the overlapping wakes of Hurricane Sandy and the reelection of a President who boasts of adding "enough new oil and gas pipeline to encircle the earth," a divestment campaign led by 350.org is under way across the country. The target: fossil fuel companies.

The day after the election, 350.org, led by long-time environmental writer Bill McKibben, kicked off a 22-city Do the Math divestment campaign. After having some provisional success in winning the denial of a permit for the Keystone XL pipeline earlier this year, McKibben and 350.org are pivoting from lobbying elected officials to calling on schools, churches and government pension funds to sell off fossil fuel stocks. 350.org is modeling its effort on the South Africa divestment campaign of the 1980s that helped bring an end to apartheid.

The campaign's start date of Nov. 7 was no accident.

"We know that many people have put a lot of effort into re-electing Barack Obama. But we want to insist on the tremendous amount of work that continues to need to be done," said Katie McChesney, a field organizer with 350.org.

The tour which continues into December, stopped in New York on Nov. 16.

While it is unclear how much of a dent this divestment effort will make in the bottom lines of fossil fuel companies, 350.org's strategy is more focused on building a broad coalition of supporters that will pressure these companies over the long term.

The mood has been both high-spirited and intense, with a sold-out audience of 1,600 people attending the tour's debut in Seattle, Wa., on Nov. 7. Yet he remains solemn, reminding attendees that the way forward will be long and hard. His assessment of climate activism thus far: "It's not enough. It's nowhere near."

The math at the centerpiece of the campaign demonstrates the urgent need to rapidly reduce the amount of carbon dioxide we produce. According to 350.org, almost every government in the world agrees that any global warming above 2 degrees Celsius would be catastrophic. However, fossil fuel corporations currently have five times more oil, coal and gas reserves — totaling 2,795 gigatons — than climate scientists think is safe to burn. Scientists estimate that only 565 more gigatons of fossil fuels can be burned before we lose any chance of avoiding warming that

exceeds the 2 degrees Celsius mark.

For the fossil fuel industry to heed the scientists and leave these reserves underground, they would have to write off roughly \$20 trillion in carbon assets.

During the tour, McKibben will be joined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, author Naomi Klein and *Gasland* filmmaker John Fox, among other notable figures, to connect the dots.

But Do the Math is about more than just speeches.

"The tours are also about mobilizing people for further actions and movement-building," said McChesney, "We're trying to build a model that people can use and develop autonomously. We're also hoping that community divestment in fossil fuel companies is on the table and that it becomes a reality."

To learn more about how to divest from fossil fuels, visit gofossilfree.org.

—Anooj Kansara

to build sea-walls, the water still has to go somewhere. Hence, planning to save some areas of New York may end up simply shifting the water elsewhere and inundating, for example, New Jersey. There is also the fact that all of the pollution run-off and raw sewage from overwhelmed sanitation systems would then be trapped on the city-side of the gates. Third, while the Netherlands recently completed a storm surge barrier that takes into account such an unlikely possibility as a once-in-ten-thousand-years weather event, the United States, with its short-term planning predicated on cutting state and federal budgets on infrastructure and elevating short-term corporate profits is unlikely to come up with the resources to pull off a project like this. It is highly likely therefore, that whatever is planned and built today will skimp on costs and be inadequate for storm surges of the future. As things currently stand, a not unrealistic foot and a half of sea-level rise by 2050 combined with a storm surge would require New York to evacuate three million people. Lastly, there's the enormous economic cost for such a technological fix, which may not effectively address the long-term issues we face and come with unexpected and undesirable outcomes.

Given the self-evident inadequacy of New York and New Jersey's storm preparedness in light of Sandy, despite years of scientific reports documenting the possibility of a major storm causing havoc in the area, it seems clear that only one force has enough power to thwart the self-serving and derisory solutions promulgated by politicians in thrall to corporate interests: the power of the people to organize in our own interests. Only by demanding and fighting for substantive change will we be able to live in safety and security in our own city, breathing clean air and drinking pure water.

Our public high school students have some excellent ideas about where to start:

"New York City could build high walls all around to keep out the water, turning us into prisoners in our own city and preventing use of our greatest natural resource. Instead of confining New Yorkers we can find suitable solutions through creating a soft shoreline with native organisms that were heavily populated in this area.

"As aquaculturists at the New York harbor school we grow oysters for environmental restoration. Oysters are a keystone species which means they have a disproportionate positive effect on their ecosystem. Oyster reefs provide habitat for small marine life and filter water of nitrogen and phosphorous by consuming algae that contain these nutrients.

"Oyster reefs act as wave attenuators and benthic stabilizers."

In other words, we can use natural flood defenses, such as the restoration of salt marches and coastal wetlands, along with a well-funded and general campaign to return oysters to New York's estuary, to build natural resilience into New York's ability to cope with large storms and help filter and clean the water. Half of the coastal wetlands of the United States have been lost over the last 50 years.

There are of course smaller things that need doing, such as moving vulnerable electrical equipment above storm surge levels and retrofitting subway stations and tunnels to be more resilient and protected from flooding. Con Edison could have spent the \$250 million in investment the company deemed necessary to install submersible switches and move high-voltage transformers above ground level but instead preferred to use the \$1 billion in profit it made last year for other purposes.

While the New York Times recently reported on some more natural possibilities for increasing the climate resilience of the city, melding ecology with infrastructure was in fact the thesis of an exhibit at MoMA in 2010. Five architectural teams gave their vision to create "soft edges" to New York in order to absorb, rather than repel, storm water. Not only would this create a visually stunning, highly resilient city, but create environments conducive to a more variegated and enriched environment for animal, plant and human life.

In contrast to the reductive and limited thinking that is illustrated by simply saying

Rather than adopting a siege mentality...we could build a city that is a genuine testament to forward-thinking, long-term-planning worthy of the 21st century.

let's build more walls, the approach taken by the architects and landscape designers represents a much more holistic philosophical approach that is far more likely to be successful in term of allowing New York to weather the next storm, not to mention a much more aesthetically pleasing place to live.

Apart from re-greening coastal areas, the city and region needs much more planning with regard to coastal development to prevent the kind of helter-skelter regulated development of areas that are known flood plains. As an investigative report published in the *Huffington Post* documented about a local manifestation of the wild-west nature of contemporary capitalism:

"Authorities in New York and New Jersey simply allowed heavy development of at-risk coastal areas to continue largely unabated in recent decades, even as the potential for a massive storm surge in the region became increasingly clear.

"In the end, a pell-mell, decades-long rush to throw up housing and businesses along fragile and vulnerable coastlines trumped commonsense concerns about the wisdom of placing hundreds of thousands of closely huddled people in the path of potential cataclysms."

The report places blame for this type of development, which took place in some of the worst hit areas, such as the Jersey Shore and the Rockaways, to the power of capital to sway politicians who knew of the risks, even as they approved of the building frenzy:

"Developers built up parts of the Jersey Shore and the Rockaways, a low-lying peninsula in Queens, N.Y., in similar fashion in recent years, with little effort by local or state officials to mitigate the risk posed by hurricanes, experts said. Real estate developers represent a powerful force in state politics, particularly in New Jersey and New York, where executives and political action committees have been major donors to governors and local officeholders.

"This coastal growth took place even as public and private sector leaders in both New York and New Jersey began expressing growing concern over the potential for climate change to intensify storms and accelerate already rising sea levels. New York City officials in particular were well aware of the ways in which climate change would make the potentially destructive effects of a major hurricane worse, scientists said."

Therefore, a radical re-evaluation is needed of where buildings are placed. Simply rebuilding what existed before, perhaps jacking up the foundations a bit or requiring extra flood insurance, cannot be the answer. Much stricter regulations on building location and building requirements themselves, such as the location of boilers, flood-proofing basements, etc.

are needed.

Buildings themselves are a major source of carbon emissions from heating and cooling. Rather than constructing buildings to require air-conditioning, how could we instead create buildings with building materials and layouts that maximize natural heating and cooling effects, including the expanded use of geothermal heat pumps?

We need to vastly increase car-free zones and bring trams back to New York. Many streets in Manhattan should be made into pedestrian-only areas and planted with trees. Whenever sidewalks are replaced, they need to

be made from a water-permeable material, as cities such as Chicago have already begun to do.

With many fewer cars in city centers, the concomitant huge expansion of public transit and the creation of a pedestrian- and bike-friendly city, the vast oceans of impermeable concrete that contribute to storm run-off, otherwise known as parking lots, can similarly be transformed into tree-lined water parks.

On average, any given car is only in use around 5 percent of the time, often with a single occupant. On top of that, an internal combustion engine is only about 25 percent efficient. We couldn't have designed a more

inefficient use of resources and a better pollution emitter if we had started with that as our actual objective. There are enough non-residential parking spaces in the United States for 800 million cars; in some cities one-third of the total surface area is taken up by parking lots.

As temperatures rise due to global warming, life — and death — in cities that experience a greater number of 90-plus-degree days is a critical issue to address. Air conditioning, car engines and concrete all contribute to the urban heat island effect and rising temperatures worsen air quality.

Therefore, taking these measures on buildings, transportation and other aspects of urban infrastructure, all of which will cost less than building sea-walls while simultaneously positively contributing to city dwellers' quality of life and the long-term resilience of cities, are a no-brainer. In even more good news, doing this on a fast timetable will get tens of thousands of people back to meaningful and fulfilling employment that is socially useful and eminently necessary.

However, these things will only occur if we fight against the entrenched economic and political interests and form organizations capable of effectively putting them forward and demanding their implementation.

Chris Williams is a long-time environmental activist and author of Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Ecological Crisis.



The Day After HURRICANE SANDY, THE ELECTIONS

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

It was beautiful, the hurricane. On the website, it was a white spiral as if someone unplugged a drain in the sky and the clouds swirled down. It spun over the Caribbean, leaving a trail of dark battered islands in its wake. I watched the tally of the dead rise; in Jamaica, one dead; in Haiti, 54 dead and Cuba, 11 dead.

And yet, I didn't take it seriously. It'll peter out. The window-shaking wind seemed like fun. I laughed with Mom over the phone as the sky darkened and rain scraped the street like a Brillo pad. She was going to the evacuation center but had to waterproof things in her apartment first. And then her phone cut off.

New York stumbled after Hurricane Sandy like someone roughhousing with a friend and caught a surprising elbow to the eye. We flicked useless light switches, turned on dead computers and stared at trees piled in the street. Mom was on Staten Island in a basement apartment near the shore and I imagined her being carried away in the flood. Where was she? Does she have food, water? Did she get to the center in time?

And then she sent a text, "People who live behind me have died, including two children who were swept away from their mother's arms. I watched as police boats brought out bodies from my street."

The next day, I drove a U-Haul van down Father Capodanno Boulevard in Staten Island, eyeing the ripped telephone poles, moldy furniture piled on the street, metal gates twisted like coat hangers. And then I saw her. I parked the van, jumped out and instantly she wept as I wrapped my arms around her.

Inside the carpet squished underfoot, I was stunned at the sight of Mom's whole life in a dark wet pile. Nothing was salvageable. "Your high school graduation photo," she said and held up a soggy picture of me smiling in a blue robe.

"Mom," I sighed, "Let's say good-bye to this. Let it go."

"Wait," she repeated as she picked up photos that crumbled into smaller and smaller pieces. "Wait."

THE AFTERMATH

She takes anti-anxiety pills. Sometimes, she wakes up in the night to watch Netflix until sleep overtakes her again. She blames herself for renting in Staten Island. She feels calm when folding clothes and putting them into my closet. "I can't sleep anymore," she huffs, "It's like everything keeps shaking inside me."

Watching Mom go through stages of loss, shock, self-blame, grief and the re-assembling of life, I see in her the people I interviewed in 2005, driven out of New Orleans

by Hurricane Katrina. I see again the ragged homeless of Haiti I talked to, living in tents after the 2010 earthquake. Of course, it's not the same magnitude. She's physically fine. No broken bones, no amputations. She can stay with me. She has insurance to replace the car. But they share the same panicked face, the same worry, fear and helpless clutching at whatever or whoever is stable enough to hold.

Forty-thousand New Yorkers lost their homes. But they are in a First-World city where resources are closer at hand. Just do the simplest search on Wikipedia, enter "Environment Migrant" and you will read of 42 million people in Asia and the Pacific made homeless by storms that lashed the land, cold fronts that killed crops, rising seas that lapped tides against front doors. By 2050 the number of climate refugees could climb to 150 million people. Immense rivers of people flowing over national borders, lugging rice bags, balancing luggage on their heads, gaunt and bleary-eyed. They'll follow their hunger, search for safety and be corralled by the military into camps where they will live in legal limbo. Each one, I can imagine waking at night, panicked and trying to find someone or something that is stable enough to hold.

And where will they go? And just as important to ask is, what of their stories? The narrative geography of our imagined community, who we "see" as our neighbor is created by a global media filtering them through an ideological screen. In the left mythos, they are the deserving poor, whose suffering reflects our own subjective position of Good Samaritans. In the right mythos they are undeserving hordes who threaten civilization. And we saw this play out in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

New Yorkers solemnly nodded when told about Gotham's climate refugees. They were victims whose homelessness was not their fault. But beneath the sympathy were long lines of angry people at gas stations, angry apartment dwellers who ate cold food in the dark, families piled on top of each other in small rooms. The city's nerves were frayed. When Mayor Bloomberg visited Far Rockaway, people cursed him and demanded help.

He nervously repeated the litany of the legitimacy of the state. "Everyone is working as hard as they can," Bloomberg said, "People are not always going to get as many things as they want as fast as they want them."

They weren't asking for what they wanted, they were asking for what they needed — water, food, medicine. Bloomberg's condescending rhetoric repeated the sliding scale of dehumanization that is the tactic of the ruling class. First, frame the people as chil-

and power never came back? What if we were driven by hunger to break laws to survive? How long would it take for us to rush the stores? Who would we become?

The awful truth is the refugee and the criminal are defined by their need; they share a speculative identity, divided primarily by which side of the law they're on. As the seas rise and deserts grow like a burn scar across nations, the means of survival will clash with the relations of ownership. The laws that bind the 7 billion people on the planet into a capitalist pyramid scheme will force the poorest across the line from citizens to refugees to criminals. And they will walk straight into the cross-hairs of the military, into the prisons, into the abyss.

Days after the hurricane, I was helping Mom up the stairs when my friend called. He was afraid of putting his car in the garage. "If I leave it there," he said, "Some asshole is going to siphon the gas out of my tank. It's already been happening."

WE WHO ARE DARKER THAN BLUE

On the night President Obama was elected, Fox host Bill O'Reilly said, "It's not a traditional America anymore. People want stuff. They want things. And who is going to give them things? President Obama. ...The voters, many of them, feel like the economic system is stacked against them. And they want stuff."

I thought of O'Reilly's whiny tone as I saw the out-of-work guys on my street, slapping hands and yelling, "Obama!" They waved to me; I waved back and yelled, "Obama!" None of us knew exactly what the other meant just that we felt a shared joy.

But I also knew that in a few days they would be asking for money from whoever left the bodega. And they asked because, yes, they wanted things.

I felt a sad rage each time I shook my head at their outstretched palms. It is tragic to see them want control over their lives without first taking control of their minds. I mean they just dreamed in commercials. They talked of fancy cars they'd never drive, homes they'd never live in, jewelry they'd never wear.

They were taught to want the Good Life



GINO BARZIZZA

without being given a chance to create their own vision of it. Instead, the capitalism that O'Reilly celebrates flashes in their minds even though it has less and less need of them. It closes factories in high-wage nations and re-opens them in low-wage ones. It forces swollen-eyed women to sew clothes for dimes each hour. It designs robots that work without sleep. Capitalism needs fewer workers with more skills to produce larger amounts of commodities. The store shelves are lined with things the out-of-work guys on my street can't afford.

Our capitalism. It churns like a hurricane across national boundaries. It freezes nature under the sign of commodity. It forces hungry peasants into the city, where it sifts them for the lowest wage for the longest hours. It lifts up a bourgeoisie, who in turn hire the media to unleash a cascade of ideology that saturates the people. But if workers organize and demand higher wages, capitalism spirals up and away to another place with hungrier people. Left in its wake are men and women who sell their bodies, beg on street corners, who dream of what they can't have, who want things.

Climbing up the stairs, I heard my neighbor replaying President Obama's election-night speech. "To the young boy on the south side of Chicago who sees a life beyond the nearest street corner," Obama said as I reached my door, "who wants to become a doctor or a scientist, an engineer or an entrepreneur, a diplomat or even a president."

APOCALYPSE NOW

"The politicians are fucking up," a tall black woman shouted on the gas line, "If they were on their shit we wouldn't be here." Around her, people gruffly agreed. As I drove the U-Haul van, I eyed their red containers, sloshing with gasoline. Against my will, I imagined black streams of carbon rising from my van's muffler, rising from the cars on the road, rising from the buildings on the street into the sky.

Beyond the horizon, I imagined each city as a chimney of carbon spewing gas that thickened the sky like Jell-O. Under the greenhouse blanket, earth's white ice caps will vanish; land will disintegrate into desert and hurricanes slam cities. And the tall woman at the gas station will be back on this line fighting over food, gas and water as police guard the neighborhoods of the wealthy. Nature is now the battlefield for class struggle.

Blinking the imagery away, I knew it was the apocalyptic vision of the future that reverberates across the left. And it was troubling. It hung over me like a pastor. So when I parked the van and saw my apartment light was left on, it was a "green" sin. Meat in my refrigerator? A sin. My plane ticket? Another sin. And the convenience is that I don't

have to die to experience Hell. Just wait, earth will become one.

And a whole industry has arisen that — like medieval penances — lets us work off guilt by buying eco-friendly commodities. "Green" toilet paper, "green" dish soap, "green" grocery bags underneath my kitchen sink. The environmental language has even seeped into our romantic lives. Weeks ago, I caught myself saying to my lover that our relationship wasn't "sustainable."

But the other is the apocalyptic vision that drives us with fear. For a few of us that's enough. Driving past wrecked homes in Staten Island as Mom sighed heavily, I was afraid of climate change. When I see her life, ruined, its debris sprawled across my apartment, I know it's real. But it's not enough. The change is too slow and the First World will have time to recreate itself into a global gated community, until eventually, the waves breach those walls, too. By that time, it will be too late to stop the earth from dying.

And here is the social contradiction, billions of people are unemployed. They want to be consumers but the very act of consumption drives a capitalist economy that kills the planet. And they won't stop. Consuming is not just about need, it's about desire. We buy new selves when we get new shoes, new clothes, new cars and new homes.

I think back to when I felt new. It was always while creating art or protesting. The activists I know also want new selves but instead of buying them, they recreate their lives in the act of recreating the world. They march, sing, drum, block traffic, wrestle each other out of a cop's vice-like grip, get arrested and emerge from jail with a halo of heroism.

And a speculative identity exists between the consumer and the activist, both recreate themselves but where the former buys experience, the latter creates it. And that will to create seemed to be a seed-vision that was more humane, more needed than apocalypse.

Looking out the window, I imagined what it would look like if we could tax the wealthy and use their money to hire everyone on my block to green our homes. Would trees be planted on sidewalks? Would dust rise as construction crews laid down porous streets? Would the out-of-work-guys come back with hard hats after building a sea wall in Staten Island?

Is it possible to connect our vision of tomorrow with people's hope rather than fear? My Mom yelled from the bedroom, "Hey did you hear about what they're doing in Red Hook?"

"No," I said.

"That Occupy group is giving supplies to people," she said, "Reminds me of what we did in the '60s."

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The Flooded Earth

INTERVIEW BY JOHN TARLETON

Hurricane Sandy lifted up the ocean and slung it in our face — a salty, stinging lesson in how close we live to the sea. For Peter D. Ward, New York's inundation came as little surprise.

A University of Washington paleontologist and expert on how past episodes of climate change have dramatically altered life on Earth, Ward authored *The Flooded Earth: Our Future in a World Without Ice Caps in 2010*. Grounded in science, the book is a creatively envisioned postcard from a future in which humans have failed to halt and reverse global warming. The book bombed commercially — it was the least successful of the more than a dozen books Ward has written. “People don’t like to hear bad news,” he says. Surrounded by bad news, but grateful to have a working phone and internet connection, I called Ward a few days after the storm to learn what else the ocean might have in store for us.

JOHN TARLETON: What does the future hold for coastal cities like New York?

PETER WARD: If carbon emissions continue to increase, we could be at 600 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by 2100, higher than anytime since a few million years ago when the planet was much warmer. We know from the record that when we reach 1,000 parts per million of carbon dioxide and stay there long enough, ice sheets have completely melted. This means oceans would rise 240 feet higher than they are today which would wipe out all the world’s coastal cities.

JT: Why does a three-foot increase in sea level matter?

PW: If future storms like Sandy start from a tidal height that is three feet higher, that will hugely increase the destructive power of their storm surge. The impact I would be way more concerned with is the salinization of croplands as seawater goes laterally a long distance.

We’ve seen the start of this problem in the San Joaquin Valley in California. River deltas where much of the world’s food is produced, such as rice in Asia, are in great peril from encroaching

salt water. If crops fail and there is famine, you could see enormous unrest and gigantic numbers of people moving from one country to the next.

JT: Research into past instances of climate change show it can happen quite rapidly. How close are we to stumbling into runaway global warming?

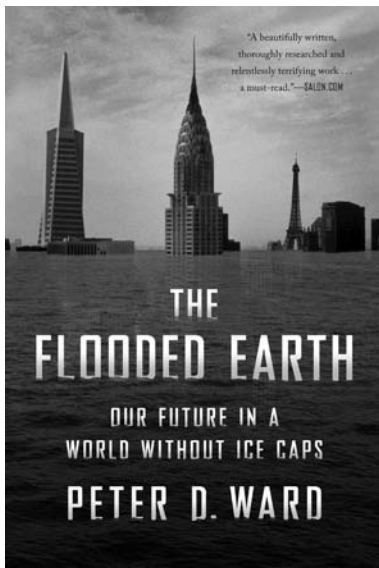
PW: We’re at 391 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It’s said if we can keep it below 450 ppm, we can avoid runaway global warming. But no one knows.

JT: How does a warming world affect the physics and chemistry of the oceans?

PW: The Earth warms way more at the poles than it does at the equator. So if you warm the poles and don’t increase the temperature in the equator, the all-important temperature difference between the poles and the equator gets lower and lower.

This matters because the only thing that makes currents on this planet is a cold high-latitude and

the warm mid-latitude and warm equator. Once you’ve got pretty much the same temperature from pole to equator, there is no wind. There is no high-pressure and low-pressure cells. Ocean currents



a World War I shelling by gas.

That would take millennia to happen, but new computer models suggests that big ocean current systems in the Pacific Ocean could start noticeably slowing down early in the 22nd-century followed by the Atlantic about a century later.

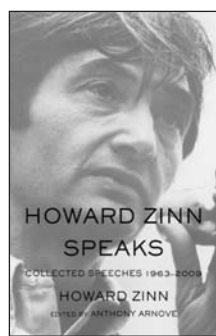
JT: How has your research into past mass extinction events shaped your understanding of what we’re experiencing now?

PW: Global warming has caused every single mass extinction event except the demise of the dinosaurs. And even in the case of the dinosaurs, there was a precursor extinction just before the asteroid hit.

JT: You’ve spent a lot of time contemplating the catastrophes of the ancient past as well as the present.

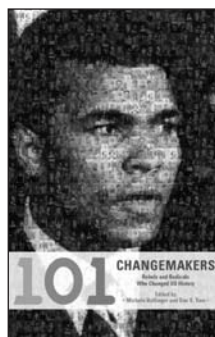
PW: I think about it like Dickens’ *Christmas Carol*. That’s a powerful story because things change. What I try to do is show people the Ghost of Christmas future so they recognize the future does not have to be that way.

“Collected here for the first time, Howard’s speeches—spanning an extraordinary life of passion and principle—come to us at the moment when we need them most: just as a global network of popular uprisings searches for what comes next. We could ask for no wiser a guide than Howard Zinn.” —Naomi Klein



In this *New York Times* bestseller, Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan provide a vivid record of the events, conflicts, and social movements shaping our society today. They give voice to ordinary people standing up to corporate and government power across the country and around the world.

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Archiving for the Future

Social movements have always been difficult to archive. Too often, they are repressed and censored. Also, as media become digitized, there may be fewer tangible artifacts left behind for posterity to consider.

“With iPads and Kindles all of this printed information is co-opted by corporations. You can’t share it, you can’t give it to a friend, you don’t even own it. Even though people see digital media as a way to make texts conveniently accessible, it’s just this nebulous kind of world at the same time,” explains Molly Fair, a founding member of the Interference Archive (IA).

But the Brooklyn-based IA — which will be a year old this December — seeks to preserve political ephemera through exhibitions

featuring everything from bumper stickers and T-shirts to posters and magazines, while also exploring the relationship between cultural production and social movements through talks, screenings, workshops and publications.

In the very tangible, user-friendly world of IA, ephemera from anti-nuclear movements from the ’70s coexist with books about Native American resistance. There is a drawer full of posters designed by Peg Averill for the War Resisters League (some of her original prints are part of the Smithsonian Institute’s permanent collection). Visitors to the IA can pick up the posters and interact with them.

“We’re able to look at this legacy of design and how ideas are created through visuals,” says Fair,



who, along with fellow archive founders Josh MacPhee and Kevin Caplicki, is a member of Justseeds artists cooperative.

The IA has featured several free exhibitions exploring a range of social movements, including Riot Grrrl, the anti-nuclear-power movement in Japan and a retrospective of work from Sublevarte, a Mexican printmaking collective that started in 1999 during a student strike at the National School

of Arts.

This fall, IA also hosted a series of open houses, and the organization’s future plans include developing an online database of the materials in its collection as well as offering extended hours.

While some might question the role of printed material in future social movements, Fair doesn’t think that posters, stickers and the like will be undermined by the digital age.

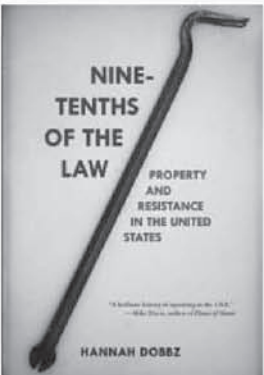
“You can take a roll of stickers and go from downtown to uptown putting them up everywhere. You’re going to get all kinds of reactions and you’re going to understand the ways the public space is policed,” explains Fair. “People still have to be out in the streets and interact with each other in person. Having a huge sign, though it may seem old-fashioned, definitely isn’t something that’s going away.”

—ROBIN KILMER

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REVIEW

Bohemia Goes Big Bucks

The Last Bohemia: Scenes from the Life of Williamsburg, Brooklyn
BY ROBERT ANASI
FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX, 2012

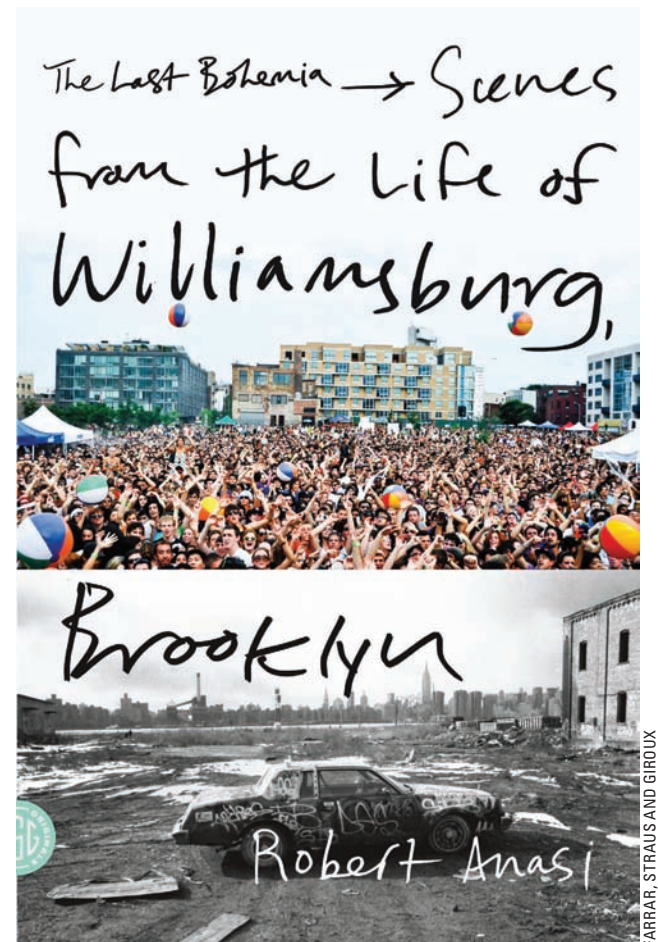
When I return to the block in Red Hook, Brooklyn, that was home to my first New York apartment ten years ago, I am shocked by the change. An entire block of burned-out buildings has been replaced with new apartments, and the city is remodeling the sketchy footbridge over the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway where I used to dodge heroin addicts and crush their multi-color tabs littering the pavement as I hurried by.

The fact that neighborhoods in New York change is nothing new, and in *The Last Bohemia* Robert Anasi writes about his life in the context of a gentrifying neighborhood. In the late '80s and early '90s the now commercially vibrant section of Bedford Avenue near where the author lived was a hellhole of abandoned storefronts, drug dealers, junkies and homeless people. Readers looking for war stories such as boxing bums, junkies bottoming out and breakups will be rewarded as Anasi took good notes during his starving artist days in the neighborhood.

Still, some readers may roll their eyes at stories of Williamsburg's pioneering hipsters who have since been priced out of the neighborhood. But then you would miss the book's gems, such as an account of what happened when Esther Bell, an aspiring filmmaker, met two homeless men:

"The men told Esther that they were Vietnam vets and on their way home from work. Home? Home was under the pool, in a subterranean maze of corridors and pipes. And they weren't the only people who found the catacombs useful. 'Sure,' the vets told Esther. 'The Mafia dumps bodies down there.' They claimed to have seen the corpses."

So how did Williamsburg



go from being an urban slum to a desirable place to live with high rents? Geographer and CUNY professor Neil Smith, who died in September, theorized that gentrification was an economic process that sought to capitalize on the actual land price given its current use and the "potential ground rent that might be gleaned under a 'higher and better' use." The trick in development is to decipher when to capitalize on the difference between the ground rent and the potential rent.

In the 1990s, banking deregulation in Washington unleashed capital on Wall Street and investors saw condos where vacant lots once stood. Albany began to allow landlords to destabilize rent-regulated apartments, turning tenements into potential goldmines. In the 2000s, the Bloomberg administration rezoned the vast waterfront for high-rise construction, and the time was ripe to capitalize.

The book's cover juxtaposes these two worlds — a scene from a raucous waterfront concert with new condo buildings as a backdrop sits above a photo of a graffiti-covered car parked in a garbage-strewn tundra that melts into the East River.

Anasi does not care much for the new, gentrified Wil-

liamsburg and gives the requisite dis to shiny condos, but he also sneers at independent bookstore Spoonbill & Sugartown, which prominently displayed *The Last Bohemia* throughout the summer. Anasi would have done well to cite Kim Moody's *From Welfare State to Real Estate* for analysis of gentrification. While artists certainly play a role in gentrification, organized real estate and financial interests are the primary driving forces, using their political clout to change city policies and develop vast stretches of New York.

For Williamsburg's starving artist, working-class and Latino renters, who have been pushed out of the neighborhood by rising rents, there are bills pending in Albany that would re-stabilize apartment rents and possibly make permanent affordable housing mandatory in medium and large developments.

Williamsburg can balance newer, more expensive development while protecting its older rent-stabilized housing stock — it just takes political will.

—BENNETT BAUMER

Bennett Baumer has lived in Williamsburg for the last two-and-a-half years.

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